

Child Safety Policy

The Whelden Memorial Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. The safety and well-being of children using the library is a serious concern. In addition to its Behavior Policy, the library maintains the following policy concerning child behavior and supervision.

Responsibilities

Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by a responsible caregiver, defined by the library as an individual over the age of 14 who is entrusted with the care of a minor. Accompanied is defined as "within sight." An unaccompanied minor is defined as a child who is in the library alone or whose caregiver is in the library but is not adequately supervising.

Staff are not responsible for providing supervision and care of children of any age, whether in the library or on library premises. Staff do not monitor children entering or exiting the building nor do they monitor who they are leaving with. Even when absent, the responsibility for the care, safety, and behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian. Parents/guardians assume all liability for damage done by their children to the library facility, equipment, and materials.

In addition to our Behavior Policy, if a staff member deems a child's behavior to be inappropriate or disruptive to other users (i.e., running, horseplay, shouting, etc.), staff may give a verbal warning to the child, and if possible, will inform the caregiver. If an unattended minor is asked to leave the library, staff will make their best attempts to contact a parent/guardian/caregiver to inform them of the situation, but they are not required to do so. In some cases, minors may be asked to leave the library for a stated period of time and will not be allowed back until a parent/guardian has met with the Library Director.

Unaccompanied Minors, Emergencies, and After Hours

In case of a medical emergency, and staff, using their best judgment, determine it to be a dangerous situation, emergency services will be contacted, then the parent/guardian/caregiver, in that order.

Staff will attempt to contact a parent/guardian/caregiver for the following reasons:

- a child under the age of 10 is left unattended during operating hours, or during a library program (unless otherwise permitted in the program requirements)
- a child under the age of 14 is alone in the building at closing

If staff are unable to reach a responsible caregiver and a period of 30 minutes has elapsed, they will contact the Barnstable Police Department to assume responsibility for the child. Under no circumstances will a library staff member remove or transport a child away from the library building. In the case of a child left alone in the building after closing, two staff members will remain with the child until pickup. In all cases, an incident report will be filed and the Library Director will be notified. If/when a parent/guardian/caregiver arrives, staff may explain the Child Safety Policy and provide a written copy if necessary.

Group Visits

It is recommended that the Library Director be contacted prior to any group visit to the building so the library staff can make the visit special, meaningful, and fun. Adults accompanying a daycare, class, supervised visit, or other group stand *in loco parentis* while using the library. When visiting the library, we ask the following:

- The child-to-adult ratio is adequate to ensure appropriate supervision without the assistance of library staff
- The Library Director is informed of planned visits that are more than an hour long and/or occur more than three times a week

If it is determined that these requirements are not met, the group visits may be suspended by the Library Director, until changes are made.

Repeat violations of this policy may result in restriction or loss of library privileges or access for minors and/or their parents/guardians/caregivers. See the library's Behavior Policy for appeals information.

Approved:

Whelden Memorial Library Board of Trustees, February 2022